

# Global and National Handwashing Awareness Week – December 1-7, 2020

## Global Handwashing Day



The COVID-19 pandemic provides an important reminder that one of the most effective ways to stop the spread of germs and stay healthy is also one of the simplest — handwashing with soap and water. Keeping hands clean can prevent 1 in 3 diarrheal illnesses and 1 in 5 respiratory infections, such as a cold or the flu.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has modified the behavior of hand hygiene practices. The speed of transmission and frightful death rates have led many countries to introduce measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, including hand hygiene which has been an important part of the international response to the emergence of this disease. In honor of National Handwashing Awareness Week, let's make hand hygiene habit a norm and sustain the habit – clean hands save lives!

Hand hygiene is one of the simplest yet most important and effective measure to maintain cleanliness and prevent infection.

By Wai Khuan Ng, PhD, principal consultant, Asia-Pacific & International Infection Prevention and Control at Joint Commission International

From Iredell Health System

Approaching winter and the peak flu season, National Handwashing Awareness Week is appropriately celebrated each year at the beginning of December. Now in the midst of a growing number of COVID-19 cases, the holiday observing healthy handwashing is more relevant than ever.

Germs, or pathogens, are types of microorganisms that can cause disease. Some germs are resistant to antibiotics, but washing your hands can help prevent the spread of these germs that are becoming difficult to treat. By effectively reducing the spread of germs, washing your hands is one of the best ways to prevent many illnesses, including COVID-19.

Though simple handwashing has always been considered when hands are visibly dirty, scientific discoveries in germ theory have shown the importance of washing our hands even when we don't see something on them. It can still be difficult to take seriously something we don't see or that we feel is not directly affecting us, but COVID-19 has brought handwashing to the forefront of public concern.

“I keep hoping that after this is over, these new habits we’re learning to acquire will help us going forward even with seasonal flu and other acquired transmissions,” said Pam Gill, Iredell Health System’s director of infection prevention.

While circumstances have changed, the basics in infection control have not.

“You need to use them together; handwashing is part of the group of basic techniques to use, but it has to be used with wearing the mask and social distancing to be effective when combating COVID-19,” Gill said.

Iredell Memorial has hand sanitizer dispensers placed at its entrances and in all patient rooms. The hospital provides health care lotion compatible with latex gloves for its staff, uses hand hygiene monitors to collect data, and educates patients on hand hygiene.



## References

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3. World Health Organization. (2011). [Report on the Burden of Endemic Health Care-Associated Infection Worldwide](#). Retrieved 12.2.2020

## References:

<https://www.cdc.gov/>